

## A RE-ANALYSIS OF COHESION AND COHERENCE

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### ABSTRACT

Language is a set of stratified semiotic systems in which a text lies on top of language structure. Although they are basic attributes of a text, presently, there is no definite theory concerning the relationship between cohesion and coherence. Based on the illustration of its development from scholars both home and abroad, the paper expounds that there is no obligatory connection between cohesion and coherence and reveals the fact that the generation mechanism for textual coherence is the metaphorical feature of language from systematic nature and structural mapping of metaphors.

**Keywords:** text; cohesion; coherence; metaphoric feature

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis as a subject was only developed after the 1950s. Discourse analysis usually refers to the language analysis of language units that are larger than sentences, such as sentence groups and paragraphs. What is discourse? The definition of Hu Zhuanglin (1994) is: "Discourse refers to any natural language that is not completely constrained by sentence grammar and expresses complete semantics in a certain context." De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) believe that cohesion is an important feature of a text, which mainly reflects on the surface structure of the text, that coherence exists at the bottom of the text, and that the semantic connection is achieved through logical reasoning. Cohesion and coherence belong to the meta-functional analysis theory of discourse in Halliday's functional grammar. Halliday and Hasan (1976) pointed out that cohesion is an important condition for the existence of a text, but cohesion only does not necessarily produce a text, and a text must have cohesion, that is to say, cohesion is one of the necessary conditions for the production of discourse. Hu Zhuanglin regards discourse structure as a cohesive device and puts forward the view that discourse coherence involves multiple levels. He believes that the social semiotic layer plays an important role in discourse coherence and that for a meaningful and acceptable text, its components at all levels of the language can show a certain degree of cohesion so that the speaker's intention to express in the communication process can penetrate the entire text in order to achieve the purpose of communication. Therefore, it can be seen that cohesion is a semantic concept and a semantic relationship between different semantic components in a text. By using some words that have a meaning connection with each other, a semantic chain that runs through the text is established and constitutes a bond of discourse organization in the text so as to ensure the coherence of the text. Cohesion and coherence are two important concepts in text research. As for the relationship between cohesion and coherence, people currently have many different views. From the 1870s to the

present, there have been two main views coexisting. One is that coherence is based on cohesion; the other is that cohesion is produced on the basis of discourse coherence. Some scholars believe that cohesion is a prerequisite for discourse coherence and that a coherent text must first be cohesive; some believe that cohesion only partially plays a role in discourse coherence, and cohesive discourse does not necessarily have cohesion, but cohesion can promote discourse coherence. How to grasp the essence of cohesion and coherence and the relationship between the two is an important issue that cannot be avoided in discourse analysis. The author believes that discourse coherence and cohesion are not necessarily related. Cohesion exists on the surface of the language and is the tangible network of the text; coherence is hidden in the deep layer of the text and is the invisible framework of the text, and most importantly, the textual coherence is determined by the metaphorical nature of the language.

## 2.0 COHESION THEORY AND COHERENCE THEORY

Halliday and Hasan (1976) defined cohesion as "when a certain linguistic component in a text needs to be interpreted by another linguistic component, a cohesive relationship arises" (1976: 4). And the cohesive means are divided into two categories: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. The grammatical cohesion includes reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction; lexical cohesion includes reiteration, synonymy, antonym, superordinate/hyponym and collocation, etc. Hu Zhuanglin (1994) further expanded the scope of the text, proposed a multi-level model of cohesion, and expanded the cohesive form into five levels, which are from top to bottom: social semiotic level, semantic level, structural level, lexical level and phonological level. In other words, cohesion is a kind of semantic relationship. Nevertheless, many linguists tend to regard cohesion as a formal concept, a formal connection within a text.

Widdowson (1973) first proposed coherence as terminology. Coherence is a very controversial topic. Different linguistic schools have come to different concepts from different angles. Nunan (1993) and McCarthy (1993) both believe that coherence makes people feel that the text is a meaningful whole, rather than a bunch of random sentence groups. Crystal (1992) believes that coherence is a potential functional connection of a discourse. For the coherence of the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976:23) put forward two requirements: the discourse is coherent in context, so it is consistent in the register; the discourse itself is coherent and therefore cohesive. Van Dijk (1977) studies coherence from the perspective of semantics, focusing on the transmission of written textual information, and believes that coherence is a semantic feature of a text. Making use of discourse analysis and behaviour theory, Widdowson (1978) thinks that coherence is a pragmatic concept that expresses the relationship between speech acts. Coherence is the discourse feature of words, clauses and sentence groups that are conceptually, logically and appropriately connected together. A coherent text has an internal logical structure that runs through the entire text from beginning to end, organically linking all concepts together, achieving the effect of clear temporal and spatial order and clear logical progression (Li Yunxing, 2001). Coherence is the basic condition to distinguish discourse from non-discourse (Zhang Delu, 2003). Domestic research on coherence mostly focuses on the study of coherence within the text, while foreign linguists also emphasize the coherence of symbols and extra-text factors within the text, that is to say, the social and cultural context, readers' cognitive psychology and world knowledge

playing the role of a bridge in the construction of text coherence. Consequently, a three-dimensional framework system is built up connecting vertically three levels of grammar-meaning-pragmatics and horizontally morphemes-words-sentences-discourse units involving all various elements of language as well as all aspects of society, culture and cognition.

### **3.0 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COHESION AND COHERENCE**

#### **3.1 Etymological Analysis**

From the source of the words, cohesion and coherence are derived from cohere, which comes from the Latin coherent (co- + haerere), which means "closely combined, internal elements or structures logically connected together to form a perfect unity". Judging from the meaning of the two words themselves, coherence means "consistency, the coherent nature or state, especially the logical, orderly, and perfect consistent relationship between parts"; and cohesion means "cohesiveness, actions, processes and conditions combined together". It can be seen from this that cohesion and coherence have the same etymology and similar meanings, which are related to the cohesion and coherence in the text. "Cohesion" is more specific and "coherence" is more abstract.

#### **3.2 Cohesion Based on Coherence**

Most scholars at home and abroad believe that coherence is the primary and cohesion is secondary. Cohesion is not the only condition for coherence. Cohesion is produced on the basis of discourse coherence. When they explored the relationship between cohesion and coherence from the perspective of cognitive science, Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) believed that cohesion is based on pre-set coherence, and the use of discourse cohesive means such as repetition, omission, substitution, and connection contributes to the ease of expression and understanding of the text, that is, enhancing the stability and economy of the text. Van Dijk (1985) analyzes the text from the perspective of semantics and text level and points out that coherence is a semantic feature of the text. The formation of textual coherence depends on the relationship between the interpretation of every single sentence and the interpretation of other sentences. Cohesion is a specific type of coherence, and the surface structure cohesion is regarded as a semantically coherent expression system, and cohesion is regarded as a grammatical expression used to explain deep semantic coherence. This view fully shows that cohesion is not the only condition for coherence, and a cohesive discourse is not necessarily coherent. The coherence of the text does not depend on the specific cohesive means itself but on the inner semantic connection between sentences. This shows that cohesion is not a sufficient condition for coherence, that is, the coherence of a text does not depend on specific cohesive means, but on the semantic connection between sentences. The domestic scholar Zhang Delu (2001) believes that the cohesion between text and context is manifested as a certain degree of recessive features, which can be called a recessive cohesive mechanism. The so-called implicit cohesion refers to the cohesion that is realized by the communicator's common knowledge, including background knowledge, context knowledge, and social convention knowledge, and formed by the gaps formed in the relationship between the information structure or the connection of the textual meaning. Explicit cohesion is clearly expressed by the language form, the cohesive relationship in vocabulary and grammar.

The central content of a text is semantic coherence in which the meaning segments or the central idea of the whole article is formed according to the connection relationship between various ideas in the text. The phenomenon of using rhetoric to link words into the text as a whole is cohesion. For example:

(1)I prefer teaching to any other job. (2)The chief reasons for the preference are as follows:  
(3) First, as a teacher I have the freedom to make my own decision in my work. (4)Second, I have the opportunity to keep on learning. (5)However, most important of all, teaching brings about changes in students.

In the above paragraphs, there is a repetitive semantic relationship between (1) and (2), and this semantic relationship is expressed by repeating the word "the preference". (3) (4) and (2) have a sequential temporal semantic relationship, which is expressed structurally by the cohesive words "first", "second" and "third"; there is a contrast between (5) and (2) The semantic relationship with emphasis is expressed through "however, most important of all".

It can be seen that the connection relationship between sentences and ideas is coherence, and the form of expressing this semantic coherence is cohesion. The relationship between the two is the relationship between content and form, that is, what kind of semantic content determines what kind of structural form. Coherence is the prerequisite. Cohesion can help strengthen and consolidate coherence. That is, cohesion should be regarded as a possible means of discourse coherence. Only when the meaning of the text is coherent can we talk about how cohesive means promote the discourse of coherence.

### 3.0 NO NECESSARY RELATION BETWEEN COHESION AND COHERENCE

Coherence comes from the semantic content of the text, while cohesion involves the structural form of the text. Cohesion constitutes the superficial structural relationship of the text, which is realized through the superficial structural forms such as vocabulary and grammar; the deep semantic or functional relationship of the coherence construction of the text is realized through the semantic or functional relationship between sentences or discourses. People's communication is based on shared knowledge, so there will be no irrelevant and meaningless communication in a conversation, and the cohesive means remain intentionally or unintentionally on the basis of coherence. Cohesion itself cannot and does not need to create coherence.

Is there always a cohesion in a coherent text?

Halliday and Hassan (1976) believe that cohesion is a necessary but not sufficient condition for texts. A coherent text must have cohesion, while a cohesive text is not necessarily coherent. However, Widdowson (1978) believes that cohesion is neither a sufficient nor necessary condition for coherence. A cohesive text is not necessarily coherent, and a cohesive text does not necessarily have cohesion. I agree with the latter view. In real life, there are indeed many examples that can be coherent without connection, such as:

M: Are you going to buy that pirated CD?

W: Do I look like a thief? (Zheng Shutang, 2005)

In this dialogue, there is no cohesion, but the reader can infer from the dialogue that W's wishes are that she will not buy pirated CDs, so it is coherent.

Coherence is firstly given by the text coder to the text itself with a semantic feature, which is the semantic relevance of the text as a whole. Discourse semantic coherence is reflected in pragmatic coherence in language use and contextual meaning, and discourse processing and in different degrees of psychological coherence with the reader's cognitive function. Discourse coherence is relatively independent of context and is mainly manifested in two relevance: meaning relevance and topic relevance, that is, the meanings between the parts of the text are related to each other, and as a whole, it is expressed as thematic consistency.

The simplicity of the language is not only reputable but perhaps even sacred. (For example,) The Bible opens with a sentence well within the writing skills: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."

Judging by semantics, the latter sentence in this example is an illustration of the previous sentence, but there is no cohesive word that shows the exemplified relationship between the two sentences. Coherence is the macro-level meaning relationship of the text, which is embodied in the relevance of meaning and the relevance of themes, and it is not determined by the language form. Although cohesion is usually embodied by formal features, formal features themselves are not cohesive relations, and cohesive semantic relations may not always be embodied by language forms.

On the contrary, can cohesion ensure the coherence of the text?

Some texts with cohesive mechanisms are not coherent. The coherent study of the meaning connection between the various components of the text and the overall connection of each part of the text is the embodiment of the consistency of the overall meaning. The most basic criterion of a coherent text is that its meaning constitutes a whole and is related to the context. Discourse coherence comes from the clever application of cohesive devices and should withstand the logical reasoning of the semantic connections between sentences and the pragmatic environment. Therefore, discourse coherence not only includes the cohesion of the internal meaning of the text but also includes the text. If the cohesive mechanism of the text exceeds the scope of the text, then the text is incoherent. E.g,

I bought a Ford. A car in which President Wilson rode down the Champs Elysees was black. Black English has been widely discussed. The discussions between the presidents ended last week. A week has seven days. Every day I feed my cat. The cat is on the mat. Mat has three letters.

This is a man-made text. On the surface, it seems full of cohesion, but in fact, it is a cohesive relationship lacking meaning, which is puzzling. Therefore, texts with cohesive mechanisms are not necessarily coherent texts. Cohesion is a grammatical means used by the speaker to express experience and interpersonal language coherence; Coherence refers to the semantic connection in a text, a psychological phenomenon, and an invisible framework for the overall meaning of the text (Huang Guowen, 2001). Therefore, the cohesive relationship is a more grammatical and formal textual relationship. In contrast, the coherent relationship is a matter of relevance and a holistic textual attribute. Zhang Yaoting(2019) believes that cognitive

default is interpreted as categorization, image schemas, frameworks, metaphors, conceptual integration and other human cognitive methods that are implicit in human thinking because thinking always spontaneously and unconsciously chooses implicitly the most suitable discourse. The cognitive method of meaning production acts on the meaning of the discourse, and this selection process is implicit in the thinking and is not reflected in the logical expression of the discourse. This kind of language implicit in thinking is the important factor that makes the text coherent, and it is also the soul of the text, that is, the metaphorical feature of language.

## 4.0 DISCOURSE COHERENCE AND METAPHOR

As a pragmatic phenomenon and discourse strategy, metaphor is an important means of discourse organization and plays a function in discourse construction, cohesion and coherence. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) pointed out that metaphor is ubiquitous in daily life, not only in language but also in thought and behaviour. The daily conceptual system on which we think and act is essentially metaphorical. The metaphor concept based on the human conceptual system believes that the metaphor is an indispensable mental mechanism for people to understand the world, organize their thinking, and conduct reasoning. Metaphor is a way of cognition. Lakoff proposed the Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM) theory, which is a relatively stable mental representation that guides cognitive processes such as categorization or reasoning. Under this theoretical model, Lakoff proposed four structural principles: prepositional structure, image-schematic structure, metaphoric mappings and metonymic mappings to explain gestalt cognition (Fan Min). The discourse function of metaphor is essentially attributed to the characteristics and working mechanism of metaphor as a cognitive tool, that is, the systematic nature of metaphor and the mapping of two cognitive domains (source domain and target domain). The systematicness of metaphor refers to the systematic transfer of semantic elements, language structure, cognitive models and even the entire internal relationship in the source domain to the target domain in the process of cross-cognitive domain mapping. Through mapping, people can use familiar things to understand abstract and unfamiliar concepts. The similarity between things is the basic condition for the mapping to occur.

### 4.1 Systematic Metaphor and Discourse Coherence

The working mechanism of metaphor is that the similarity between things triggers and contributes to the mapping between the source domain and the target domain. As mentioned above, the mapping between the two cognitive domains has systematic characteristics. Therefore, if the concept in the target domain is too abstract and lacks the cognitive structure necessary for human cognition, in this case, the semantic implication and structural features in the source domain can construct a clear and clear structure for the complex concept in the target domain. The structure of the semantic system. As a result, the structural and semantic elements in the two cognitive domains correspond to each other, forming a tightly cohesive lexical-semantic network in the text, such as:

*The girlhood of Mania was like the blossoming of the plum flower in cold January, growing on hardened, twisted branches without leaves, thriving in the cold air...and... destined to retire and enjoy its own fragrance...within the hard bark of its branches....*

In this discourse, the basic metaphor is "Mania's girlhood is like plum blossoms in full bloom in the twelfth lunar month of winter." In the article, "thriving in the cold air", "enjoy its own fragrance" and other systematic vocabulary describing the characteristics of plum blossom form a close semantic chain, although only the theme of the text is mentioned at the beginning of "Mania's Girlhood". However, the whole discourse is closely developed around this theme, and the loneliness of Mania's girlhood is portrayed in great detail. Therefore, on the one hand, metaphor can allow the theme of the text to be formed and developed in a special cognitive framework; on the other hand, the special semantic elements and structures in the source domain can also restrict the discourse of the conceptual domain through the role of mapping. Different metaphorical concepts have unity. Different aspects of the same thing can be expressed through different metaphorical concepts, but they are rather unified than contradictory.

## 4.2 Mapping and Discourse Coherence

Structural mapping is an important feature of metaphor as a cognitive mechanism. Structural mapping arises from the interaction between two cognitive domains, based on humans' personal experience of the objective world, and aims to abstract unfamiliar concepts from the concrete and familiar cognition. Mapping can be realized not only at the level of words and sentences but also at the level of discourse. The structural mapping at the discourse level is embodied in the systematic mapping relationship between chunks formed by the conceptual domain, so that conceptual metaphor becomes a strategy of discourse organization. For example:

"Hope" is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul——

And sings the tune without the words——

And never stops—at all—

And sweetest——in the gale——is heard——

And sore must be the storm——

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm

I've heard it in the most chill land——

And on the strangest Sea——

Yet, never, in Extremity,

It asked a crumb—of Me.

("Hope" Is the Thing with Feathers, Emily Dickinson)

The metaphor in this poem is "Hope is something with feathers". In his discourse, the poet mainly describes the strong behaviour of the "feathered thing" in the source domain: without any requirements, he can sing non-stop in the cold wasteland or the boundless sea. In fact, it is explaining to readers the abstract concept of "hope" in the target domain, that is, perseverance, persistence and tenacity in difficult times. In a specific context, readers can accurately locate the theme and frame of the article, so the entire poem is still a coherent whole.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the above analysis that the surface cohesive relationship of the text is based on the deep coherent relationship. Cohesion in a text is objective, and coherence is subjective. The internal cohesion of the text must be combined with the situational context and other factors to determine the coherence of the text, and there is no necessary connection between cohesion and coherence. Moreover, the generation of textual meaning is the result of cognitive inference. In communication, discourse semantic meaning and implicit meaning are not always the same, and implicit meaning can fill the gap between communicative intention and semantic meaning (Marmarridou, 2000). The realization of discourse coherence requires the listener to grasp the speaker's communicative intentions based on contextual information and pragmatic knowledge, especially coherence, which includes various factors such as situation, psychological cognition, and social culture, and these factors are in turn explained and understood through metaphor. Discourse coherence is based on the metaphorical characteristics of this language. The discourse function of metaphor is essentially derived from the structural mapping of two cognitive domains and the systematicness of metaphor, which embodies the important characteristics of metaphor as a method and tool for humans to understand the world.

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